

We stand for the fair treatment of faith-based groups, so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for Government discrimination against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon or exploited or cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench and try to remake the culture by court order.

And we stand for a culture of responsibility in America. We're changing the culture of America from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we're responsible for the decisions we make. If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're concerned about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in this new responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of leaders. This is not one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high and the challenges are difficult, the choices are clear, and resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I remember a lot that day. Workers in hardhats were shouting, "Whatever it takes." One fellow pointed at

me and said, "Don't let me down." As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I've a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend America, whatever it takes.

In these times I've also been witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, our capacity to meet serious challenges, to serve a cause greater than self-interest. But Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We will need all of these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win, and the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom. We have a duty to spread compassion and opportunity to every part of America.

This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for the United States of America, the best days lie ahead.

God bless. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:18 p.m. at the Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Olene S. Walker of Utah; Gov. Ernie Fletcher of Kentucky; Gov. Haley Barbour of Mississippi; Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger of California; Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Gov. Bob Taft of Ohio; Gov. Kenny C. Guinn of Nevada; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Calling for a Constitutional Amendment Defining and Protecting Marriage

February 24, 2004

Good morning. Eight years ago, Congress passed and President Clinton signed the Defense of Marriage Act, which defined marriage for purposes of Federal law as the legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife. The Act passed the House

of Representatives by a vote of 342 to 67 and the Senate by a vote of 85 to 14. Those congressional votes and the passage of similar defense-of-marriage laws in 38 States express an overwhelming consensus in our country for protecting the institution of marriage.

In recent months, however, some activist judges and local officials have made an aggressive attempt to redefine marriage. In Massachusetts, four judges on the highest court have indicated they will order the issuance of marriage licenses to applicants of the same gender in May of this year. In San Francisco, city officials have issued thousands of marriage licenses to people of the same gender, contrary to the California Family Code. That code, which clearly defines marriage as the union of a man and a woman, was approved overwhelmingly by the voters of California. A county in New Mexico has also issued marriage licenses to applicants of the same gender. And unless action is taken, we can expect more arbitrary court decisions, more litigation, more defiance of the law by local officials, all of which adds to uncertainty.

After more than two centuries of American jurisprudence and millennia of human experience, a few judges and local authorities are presuming to change the most fundamental institution of civilization. Their actions have created confusion on an issue that requires clarity.

On a matter of such importance, the voice of the people must be heard. Activist courts have left the people with one recourse. If we are to prevent the meaning of marriage from being changed forever, our Nation must enact a constitutional amendment to protect marriage in America.

Decisive and democratic action is needed, because attempts to redefine marriage in a single State or city could have serious consequences throughout the country. The Constitution says that "full faith and credit shall be given in each State to the public acts and records and judicial proceedings of every other State." Those who want to change the meaning of marriage will claim that this provision requires all States and cities to recognize same-sex marriages performed anywhere in America.

Congress attempted to address this problem in the Defense of Marriage Act by declaring that no State must accept another State's definition of marriage. My administration will vigorously defend this act of Congress. Yet there is no assurance that the Defense of Marriage Act will not, itself, be struck down by activist courts. In that event, every State would be forced to recognize any relationship that judges in Boston or officials in San Francisco choose to call a marriage. Furthermore, even if the Defense of Marriage Act is upheld, the law does not protect marriage within any State or city.

For all these reasons, the defense of marriage requires a constitutional amendment. An amendment to the Constitution is never to be undertaken lightly. The amendment process has addressed many serious matters of national concern. And the preservation of marriage rises to this level of national importance.

The union of a man and woman is the most enduring human institution, honoring—honored and encouraged in all cultures and by every religious faith. Ages of experience have taught humanity that the commitment of a husband and wife to love and to serve one another promotes the welfare of children and the stability of society. Marriage cannot be severed from its cultural, religious, and natural roots without weakening the good influence of society. Government, by recognizing and protecting marriage, serves the interests of all.

Today I call upon the Congress to promptly pass and to send to the States for ratification an amendment to our Constitution defining and protecting marriage as a union of man and woman as husband and wife. The amendment should fully protect marriage while leaving the State legislatures free to make their own choices in defining legal arrangements other than marriage.

America is a free society which limits the role of government in the lives of our citizens. This commitment of freedom, however, does not require the redefinition of one of our most basic social institutions. Our Government should respect every person and protect the institution of marriage. There is no contradiction between these responsibilities.

We should also conduct this difficult debate in a manner worthy of our country, without bitterness or anger. In all that lies ahead, let us match strong convictions with kindness and good will and decency.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:43 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on Senate Action To Block Medical Liability Reform

February 24, 2004

I am disappointed that a minority in the Senate has again decided to play politics and block our Nation's ability to accomplish medical liability reform.

Today's vote is a blow to America's families, because pregnant women are losing access to their obstetricians and gynecologists due to frivolous and abusive lawsuits. Pregnant women who need prenatal and obstetric health care services deserve access to doctors in their own communities. Without the passage of reasonable reforms, the Nation's badly broken medical liability system will continue to drive physicians like obstetricians and gynecologists out of the practice of medicine and drive up the costs of health care for all Americans. For the benefit of America's families and for the sake of our health care system, there needs to be medical liability reform this year.

Statement on the Parliamentary Elections in Iran

February 24, 2004

I am very disappointed in the recently disputed parliamentary elections in Iran. The disqualification of some 2,400 candidates by the unelected Guardian Council deprived many Iranians of the opportunity to freely choose their representatives. I join many in Iran and around the world in condemning the Iranian regime's efforts to stifle freedom of speech—including the closing of two leading reformist newspapers—in the runup to the election. Such measures undermine the

rule of law and are clear attempts to deny the Iranian people's desire to freely choose their leaders.

The United States supports the Iranian people's aspirations to live in freedom, enjoy their God-given rights, and determine their own destiny.

Statement on Signing the NASA Flexibility Act of 2004

February 24, 2004

Today, I have signed into law S. 610, the "NASA Flexibility Act of 2004." The Act strengthens the ability of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration to manage effectively the NASA personnel upon whom the future successes of America's civil space program depend.

Section 3 of the Act enacts new subsections 9802(g), (h), and (i) in title 5 of the United States Code, which purport to require or regulate the submission of certain plans, recommendations, and budget requests to the Congress. The executive branch shall construe these subsections in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to supervise the unitary executive branch, to withhold information the disclosure of which could impair the deliberative processes of the Executive, and to recommend for the consideration of the Congress such measures as the President judges necessary and expedient.

George W. Bush

The White House,
February 24, 2004.

NOTE: S. 610, approved February 24, was assigned Public Law No. 108-201. An original was not available for verification of the content of this statement.

Executive Order 13329—Encouraging Innovation in Manufacturing

February 24, 2004

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including the